



Why Evaluate?

Evaluating information sources is an important part of a research activity. It encourages you to think critically about your sources of information. Not all information is reliable or accurate, nor will all information be suitable for your research topic.

Questions:

1. How can you tell whether your sources are reliable, credible, and accurate?
2. What is the difference between biased and unbiased sources?



EVALUATING SOURCES

Guidelines for Students

Keep an Eye on your Research

scoilnet



Some Tips!

Now that you've found the information you're looking for, how can you make sure it's reliable and accurate? You have to evaluate the source of the information. Whether you're using information from a book, website, or blog, there are several general factors to consider:

Timeliness

Is the information current?
Old information may work for History but not if you are doing research in a rapidly developing field.

- **Books** Information in books is not always as current as the information online. If using books, try to use the latest edition.
- **Websites** Is the website kept up-to-date? Check the publication date of articles or the date when the article was last revised?

Author

Is the information from a credible, reputable and trustworthy author? Look for sources which are written by experts, reviewed by an editorial process, or based on strong credible evidence.

Credentials Consider the credibility of a source by looking at the author credentials or the reputation of the organisation.

Reviewed Investigate who the publisher is and check whether they have an editorial or peer-review process. Organisations and government agencies produce publications that are normally approved by several people. Quickly decode a website URL by examining the URL extension. Extensions such as '.gov', '.org', and '.edu' represent government agencies, organisations, and educational institutes.

Fairness Examine whether the author is showing favoritism or prejudice for or against someone or something? If the content contains bias, only one point of view is being presented. Assess for bias by examining the purpose of an article or website. For example, is the author trying to sell or promote a product? Alternatively, compare the information to other reliable sources so that you can make an informed decision whether bias is at play.

Primary Sources Primary sources are documents, images or artifacts that provide firsthand testimony or direct evidence concerning an historical topic. For example, these may include newspaper articles from the time or video recordings. Some primary sources may be judged more reliable than others.

Relevance

Make sure the information is relevant and appropriate to your research topic.



Example of Sources:

*Journals (JSTOR)
World Book Online Encyclopedia
CSO Website
' .gov', and '.org', Websites
Articles from Experts in their Field
Irish Newspaper Archive
The Irish Times Archive
RTE Archives*